

# WHY OUR FOREIGN POLICY IS FAILING

STATINTL



## AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH SENATOR FULBRIGHT BY ERIC SEVAREID

*"The men who create power make an indispensable contribution to the Nation's greatness, but the men who question power make a contribution just as indispensable . . . for they determine whether we use power or power uses us."*

President John F. Kennedy

**L**ATE IN THE AFTERNOON of a Friday in February, several million Americans snapped off their television sets and rubbed their eyes. It was the end of several days of a public inquiry into the Vietnam war conducted by the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate, which has the constitutional right and duty of advising the President as well as consenting to his foreign actions. Throughout the 16 years of America's involvement with Vietnam, the Senate had automatically . . .  
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senators were advising the Administration.

Their advice did not consist of concrete and acceptable plans for winning the war or settling the war—a legislative body cannot make a peace any more than it can wage a war. Their advice amounted to this: "Be careful! Our people do not understand this cruel war. They are divided and confused. Persuade us that this war does involve America's vital interests, does involve the freedom of mankind and the peace of the world. Give us better reasons to believe it will not lead to war with Communist China. Give us some hope that a negotiated peace that we can live with, that South Vietnam can live with, is possible, and that you are really trying to get it."

It was an astonishing phenomenon. It has only minor precedents in American history, chiefly, the Mexican War of 1846-50, when about a thousand young Americans were fighting in and

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around the scallop of Asia called Vietnam, a place most Americans had never heard of until recently; scores were dying every week; the financial cost was leaping into the billions by geometric progression. Communist China was rousing its people, by daily demonstrations, to believe that the United States was about to attack it. And at this stage of the business, many American legislators were asking, in effect: "How and why did we get into this? Is it worth it?" Whatever one's views about the ultimate justification of it, this is an appalling way for a great and peaceable nation to go to war.

The most articulately appalled of all is the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, the generally soft-spoken ex-Rhodes Scholar, the gentleman from Arkansas, James William Fulbright. The late Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy once called him "Mr. Halfbright." Former President Harry S. Truman, in a flash of anger, once called him "that overeducated SOB." His former history don at Oxford, thinking of the Fulbright scholarships that have made him a world figure, said to him once, "You are responsible for the largest and most significant movement of scholars across the face of the earth since the fall of Constantinople in 1453."

On that Friday afternoon, a few moments before they snapped off their television sets, those several million fascinated Americans had heard Senator Fulbright digging persistently at the Secretary of State. Fulbright was still trying to persuade Dean Rusk that peace negotiations with Hanoi are possible. The audience saw the Senator lean forward in his chair, peer through his dark glasses and say, "There must be something wrong with our diplomacy."

They saw Rusk, his monumental patience nearly gone, flush slightly. His aching eyes glistened in the glare of the camera lights, and he said, "Senator, is it just possible that there is something wrong with *them*?"

A world of meaning lay in this exchange, this impasse. These two men of undoubted patriotism, equally anxious that the dismal succession of world wars be broken, equally desirous that men be free to work out their own destinies, draw different lessons from the history of this century.

Rusk equates the current world problem with the problem of Hitler's time, and later, Stalin's time; he believes that unless this aggression in Vietnam is halted, Communist victory there will lead to other Communist victories in Asia and eventually to a last-ditch struggle in the form of disastrous world war.

Fulbright believes that our very resistance to this aggression—and he wonders if it is a true aggression—is just as likely, if not more likely, *in itself*, to lead to endless disturbances in Asia and eventually world war, beginning with an American-Chinese showdown.

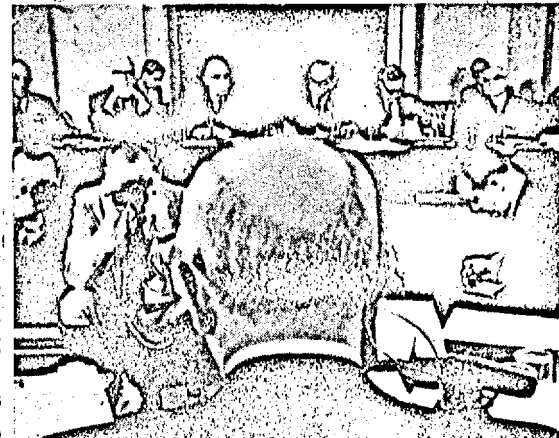
Rusk, who must enforce policy, reserves the benefits of the doubts to his own country; Fulbright, who can, as scrutinizer of policies, afford the luxury of public uncertainty, grants the benefits of some doubts to the enemy. He does not believe communism is a world, monolithic force, successfully spreading its tentacles.

Rusk thinks of America as the last, best hope of civilized man; Fulbright thinks of America as the best but not the only hope, and certainly not the last that history will see.

On the morning after the nation had witnessed this direct clash of two strong wills, I walked into the new Senate office building. The second door on the left is that of the gentleman from Arkansas. On this morning-after, it was as quiet as the eye of a hurricane. Three secretaries were at their desks in the outer office, each desk stacked with mail. Up to that hour, the Fulbright office had received about ten thousand letters, postcards and telegrams. They were running about 17 to one in favor of the Senator and his effort.

The Senator's private office is simply furnished with green-leather chairs and a couch. Low bookshelves line the walls. One abstract painting is on the wall. The Senator's college degrees. The framed original of the Fulbright Resolution of 1943, which the freshman Representative had got through the House and which, two years before the United Nations was founded, put the American Congress on record as favoring an international organization to preserve the peace of the world.

There are framed photographs showing Fulbright with LBJ. One is inscribed by the President



Fulbright and Rusk draw different lessons from the history of this century

to the Senator this way: "Than whom there is no better." Another shows Mr. Johnson leaning forward, earnestly talking to the Senator, who wears a worried scowl. This one bears, in the President's scrawl, the words: "To Bill. I can see I haven't been very persuasive."

FULBRIGHT OPENED the door in full movement, tossed a book on his desk and turned around to shake hands, all with the casual grace of a third baseman dropping into the dugout and shedding his glove. It is this casualness, I think, that

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gave rise to the Washington myth that Fulbright is a lazy man. In the congressional world of activists, of declaimers, of scurrillers, he is always under inner control. He refuses to be a major champion of minor issues. Like the trained athlete on the field or the trained actor on the stage, he gives each move its physical and emotional due—no more.

His Arkansas contemporaries remember his style as a halfback at the state university. No lost motion, no frantic sweat. He would often take the ball, then for a moment stand relaxed, almost like a man lost in thought, until he saw an opening. Then he would go for it hard. He plays politics in the same manner today.

His written speeches are the works of a craftsman of English. They flow from premise through argument to conclusion with logic and precision. But in private conversation, like many men whose minds work faster than their tongues, he will double back and around and back again. With people with whom he feels comfortable, he loves to talk. We talked, a long time, of the world as his mind encompasses it, of this public, naked exposure of the American soul that he had deliberately brought about in full understanding of its inherent dangers to the war itself and to Fulbright himself as man and senator.

I told him that he has become stamped as the leading American critic of America in the world, and I wondered about the core of his unease.

"Well, Eric, I'm the poorest person in the world to say what others think of me. They may think I'm just a congenital sorehead for all I know. I hope not. It's not because I think we're no good that I criticize our country. It's because I think it's so very good and has an opportunity to do so much more than any country in history."

He fiddled with a package of those charcoal-tipped cigarettes—his adversary, Secretary Rusk, smokes the same brand—and regarded me with that raised-eyebrow expression when I reminded him of his public ruminations about the disintegration of the Greek democracy when it extended its power commitments to Syracuse; about the Germanic obsession with power in this century, just when Germany was flourishing as a culture. Fulbright had said once: "Neither God nor nature has preordained the triumph of our free society, and it would be a tragic mistake to assume the inevitability of our survival."

Now, he leaned abruptly back in his chair, in a gesture reminiscent of the halfback squaring up with the ball in his arms. "Here we are, the most powerful and richest country in the world, a great continent under one government. I think of the advances we've made—there's my own state, which had a per capita income of \$250 only 25 years ago. Now, it's about \$1,700. If we'll just not follow the same arrogant, egotistical policies of so many powerful nations, particularly in foreign affairs. We could really break the cycle that has so drearily involved the world in silly and destructive wars."

"Take the Dominican Republic. This perhaps spurred on my feelings about Vietnam. I know you don't agree with me, but this seemed to me an utterly inexcusable interference in the affairs of a small country. These peoples want to do something

in New Zealand said, 'We want to make our own mistakes.' You see, it gives them assurance; then they move on and create whatever kind of political and social fabric that best suits them. They're not a great danger to the security of the world. It offends me that because we're so powerful, we butt in on other people's business."

"Great countries have done this time after time. I was just reading this book called *Foreign Mud*, about the way Britain got into the war with China over the opium trade. In the long run, this contributes to the destruction of the big countries."

I suggested that he had a sense of personal embarrassment about some of America's actions.

"I'm just embarrassed in front of the world. This vague thing called world opinion. I mean they expect so much of us. We've been such a fortunate country. We are drawn from so many different cultures, we were lucky in our material resources. The idea of democracy, as our great men from Washington through Lincoln have said it—not just a specialized form of government, but the people participating with all their dignity. This is a great ideal. We don't live up to it—nobody can, absolutely—but we've approached it, closer than any other great country."

I told the Senator he confused me a bit, that throughout the hearings, he had argued against the "hawks," who feared that withdrawal or compromise or switching to a defensive military position in Vietnam would damage our prestige in the world. Now, it seemed to me, he was himself emphasizing America's prestige. He sat bolt upright.

"Maybe I—you're quite right, perhaps it is our prestige I'm concerned with, but we differ in the way we would support that prestige. I think that asserting our military power against a little country destroys that prestige. I think our prestige requires that we be magnanimous in refraining from imposing our will on a country that is obviously at our mercy."

"This war—I just cannot bring myself to believe that how the Vietnamese work out their internal problems is worth a major war or even gives us the right to intervene. You see, part of this grows from a great apprehension about communism. It grew out of Stalin's barbaric use of his position as a Communist leader. But communism as a philosophy, or as a system, is not really a matter that we ought to go to war about. It's the actions of the particular people who practice it. I would support anybody who would restrain the kind of imperialism that Stalin represented. But at the other extreme is the communism of Yugoslavia. They are so much better off than they were under the Turks or under the monarchy. It is peaceful, it doesn't threaten people. So I think we get all mixed up about communism. And the reiteration by the Administration of 'Communist aggression' offends me. If they would put it the other way, that this is an aggression by a people—I think they have the Chinese in the back of their minds. If this is just Chinese imperialism, that's a different question. But they use these terms to inflame the emotions, people's fears. It's like talking about the atrocities, as if only these people were guilty of atrocities. Every people, at some time in their history, have

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to whatever weapons they may have had. This type of thing inhibits rational consideration of what's really involved, and that's why it offends me."

Fulbright is certain that the nationalist instinct is stronger than communism as an ideology and that Vietnam is a classic instance of this. The Vietnamese were a nation, they had a national identity, they were taken by force by a Western country (France), and he thinks they were trying to reassert their national independence. He finds it "really hard" to see the difference between this and what the Americans did in 1776.

The world moves on. Fulbright thinks the world and the nature of the threat from Communists have greatly altered since Stalin's time. The balance of power has changed to a highly unstable nuclear stalemate; Western Europe has recovered; the former colonial and semicolonial nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America are on the rise, caught up in an emotional fever of nationalism. And Soviet foreign policies have changed. Khrushchev's tactics were far more subtle and varied than Stalin's, more challenging to the nerves and the patience of the West. But Khrushchev made a terrible blunder when he put the missiles into Cuba, and that successful confrontation, the Sino-Soviet split, was the most visible milestone on the road to a different East-West relationship.

Fulbright has recently been accused of inconsistency because, his critics say, he was a hawk at the time of the missile crisis and recommended we invade Cuba and have done with both the missile threat and Fidel Castro. But he explains that when President Kennedy asked him to break off his campaigning trip in Arkansas and come to the White House, Fulbright knew none of the background. He knew nothing of the exchanges of letters between Kennedy and Khrushchev. He had no chance to think about the chances of the naval quarantine succeeding.

In any case, he told me, President Kennedy "wasn't asking us for consultation. He had already made up his mind. He had his speech written, and ten minutes after the meeting, he went out and gave it. We were told that they were going to put in the quarantine and that if the Russians didn't turn back and didn't respect it, that the Administration itself was prepared to take Cuba."

He is deeply perturbed by the apparent paradox that the United States leaves alone a Communist tyranny 90 miles from our shores, but sends our forces ten thousand miles away to fight Communists. "If we can live with Cuba, what difference does it make about Vietnam?" he said. He is not sure that the enemy in Vietnam wants the kind of communism practiced in Russia or would have that kind of communism if they ran the country. He inclines to believe that nationalism would be the dominant spirit in a land that has historically been anti-Chinese. Even if the regime bore the label "Communist," it would amount to a kind of buffer state against China. A Vietnam regime set up by us with the outward trappings of democracy, in close connection with us, would actually be weaker in the sense that it would be more tempting to China, when and if China does become really aggressive in the military sense.

business, it would have long since been settled in accordance with whatever the major forces within Vietnam were. I think we have delayed that settlement, and I think we have a good deal on our consciences for having intervened there in the first instance in 1950 [when we aided the French]."

Secretary of State Rusk talks about the things that are wrong with "them." He talks about "the other fellow." I asked Fulbright who this enemy precisely is—the Vietcong? North Vietnam? China? Fulbright replied, "I don't know. He says Hanoi, but I cannot free my own mind from the belief that he means China."

It is a fair inference that Fulbright does not think there is enough evidence to conclude that China is bent on conquest in the Hitler manner or that she can work her will very far through external subversion. The world-encompassing goals as stated by the Chinese defense minister, Lin Piao, have been cited by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara to justify the apocalyptic view that China is determined to become the dominant influence in Asia, Africa and Latin America. But China has been suffering setbacks—in Indonesia, in several African nations and in Cuba.

Fulbright, as a student of history and its unpredictability, would find such fears childish. He is more inclined to interpret China's thunderous propaganda challenges as Secretary-General U Thant of the United Nations does—as the natural behavior of a regime that is overwhelmed with difficulties at home and feels increasingly "encircled" by the power of Russia and the United States. Fulbright's mental processes are such that he would try to imagine the reaction of his own country if a Chinese army were fighting, say, in lower Mexico, and their planes were dropping bombs within 40 miles of the Rio Grande.

He tries to turn an international problem around, not only to understand an adversary's

SENATOR FULBRIGHT:

"If we had never stuck our nose in this business, it would have long since been settled in accordance with whatever the major forces within Vietnam were.... I think we have a good deal on our consciences for having intervened there!"

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basic interests, but to try to imagine how the adversary feels in his heart. He thinks the world is too dangerous to do otherwise. For this reason, he is perhaps more popular in Europe than he is in his own country—much like the late Adlai E. Stevenson, a comparison Fulbright by no means objects to.

The Vietnam war seems to appall him in its every aspect. He doesn't think we are even improving the Vietnamese economy, but destroying it, as of now. "I have a letter from a friend in a hospital in Bangkok," he told me, "and there's beginning this same distortion in Thailand's economy. We end up creating an awful situation we're not able to control, and if we should suddenly pull out tomorrow, they'd be in much worse shape than they were when we got there."

**T**HE SENATOR straightened and stretched and moved aside a sheaf of letters on his desk. One was a copy of a "petition" from some people in California who were demanding his recall on grounds of treason. Fulbright chuckled—he has a genuine chuckle and a genuine belly laugh.

"I get all kinds of stuff like that. I used to in the days of McCarthy. That doesn't bother me very much."

**CPYRGHT** mentioned a remark by his secretary that the current mail was running heavier than any in her experience. "That's Pallie Sims," he said. "She's my stalwart. She gets here early and leaves late. I called her on the phone yesterday and said, 'Is Lee there?' and she said, 'Could I tell him who is calling?' I said, 'Now, Pallie, if you don't recognize me'—oh, she nearly died! She said, 'I'll tell you Senator, we're nearly frantic. These phones have been ringing nearly all afternoon. I don't even recognize my own voice.'"

"Oh, I don't know. In a month or two, it will all be forgotten. The only thing I hope for out of this is that it may create a greater degree of caution, provoke more thoughtfulness. Not that I don't think the President is a cautious man, but I think he'll give much more careful consideration before an enlargement of the war."

If, I asked Fulbright, he considers the whole thing in Vietnam a series of mistakes, where was the critical error made? He said the first mistake was made in 1950 when we supported the French. "Then, we had a second opportunity to leave them alone in 1954 [after the fall of Dien Bien Phu]. Then, it gradually grew, like Topsy. I think it was a mistake for us to support Diem. He was calling the shots, and we were taking the blame and the responsibility. Then Diem was killed. Perhaps that would have been a time to say let's have a conference and see if we can't settle it by negotiation."

After the Gulf of Tonkin incident in the summer of 1964, Fulbright was floor manager for the resolution that gave congressional endorsement to the President to take any and all necessary measures to repel aggression. Today, he regrets his role in granting this blank check, though he observed at the time of its passage that Congress did not have in mind the use of American ground armies in this war. He objected to a limiting amendment proposed by Sen. Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin

because the Administration said it was an emergency, and quick, sharp response was needed to deter North Vietnam.

"But this Gulf of Tonkin incident, if I may say so, was a very vague one. We were briefed on it, but we have no way of knowing, even to this day, what actually happened. I don't know whether we provoked that attack in connection with supervising or helping a raid by South Vietnamese or not. Our evidence was sketchy as to whether those PT boats, or some kind of boats, that were approaching were coming to investigate or whether they actually attacked. I have been *told* there was no physical damage. They weren't hit by anything. I heard one man say there was one bullet hole in one of those ships. One bullet hole!"

President Johnson, who Fulbright feels did not want this war any more than he did himself, used to cite that congressional resolution as his authority for what he has done in Vietnam. Before that, he cited the Eisenhower and Kennedy "commitments." Recently, he and Secretary Rusk have put the emphasis on the SEATO treaty. The Fulbright school of critics argues that the treaty did not oblige us to fight in Vietnam any more than it obliges the other signatories, nearly all of whom are *not* fighting with us.

**S**ENATOR FULBRIGHT thinks our policy toward China has gone wrong since the great war ended. He is appalled that the most powerful nation in the world and the most populous nation in the world, both now nuclear powers, are not even on speaking terms, with nothing like the avenues of communication that existed between Russia and the United States during their times of dangerous tensions.

"One of the most disgraceful periods of all in our foreign policy," he said, "was our persistence in the support of Chiang Kai-shek after he collapsed. I don't think there was anything we could have done. I regretted very much they were Communists who won. But we should have stopped, and cut our losses." Still, changing the status of Chiang Kai-shek's Formosa, Fulbright thinks, is out of the question at the moment.

He wonders if it would not have been better to have supported Ho Chi Minh at the outset, in what some regard as his struggle for Vietnamese independence. Communist though he is. He doubts that the Vietcong is no more than a puppet of North Vietnam, as the Administration argues. He thinks they may very well have an identity and purpose of their own and that we ought to be working to split them off from Hanoi.

He wonders just how much expert knowledge about China is operating inside the Administration. "There are only five in the China section of the State Department. Think of it—the biggest country in the world, and we've got five fellows! We've got a few in Hong Kong, trying to interpret China from there. And then we have the professors."

The Senator takes pains to point out that he claims no expertise on Asia himself, that he's been to Asia only twice and never to Vietnam, and that his foreign policy energies for years have been

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concentrated on Europe. For this reason, he has been teaching himself Asian history—he usually has a book under his arm when he moves about Washington. He has been in contact with one or two of the “old China hands,” driven out of their careers in the hysteria of the McCarthy period. He invites Asian authorities, occasionally Chinese, to his handsome house just off Embassy Row for tea and talk. In order to get some long-range perspective on China for himself and his senatorial colleagues, he extended the Committee hearings to invite testimony by scholars of Asia. He is determined to get at the roots of the whole, vast, dangerous confrontation with China and, teacher that he is by instinct and early training, determined to share this understanding with the American people.

Fulbright is not at all sure that he agrees with the current intellectual fashion of regarding “spheres of influence” as an outmoded concept. He has acquired a high regard for Asian culture, but reminds himself that we are the children of Europe, sharing common concepts of law and politics, existing in the same cultural fabric. Part of the fashionable argument is that missiles and jets have shrunk the world in time and space, if not yet in cultures and casts of mind, and that our power can reach anywhere in minutes or hours. This argument says, in effect, that every place on the globe is essentially equidistant from America, and that we should adjust our foreign policies accordingly. Though he did not put it this way himself, I think the Senator would regard this notion as a variant for the technological age of what psychologists call “the illusion of the central position,” which begins with the child in the crib and continues to affect the psyche of whole peoples.

He finds degrees of illusion in the American sense of historic time. We built a continent in a hurry, by a combination of good fortune in our people, soil and climate, a phenomenon without parallel. So we instinctively believe human problems are to be solved, not alleviated, as Europeans instinctively feel. What we accomplished at home, we seem to think we can accomplish in alien societies and with the same speed. And so our governmental semantics has outrun the realities, and we have talked about “unleashing Chiang Kai-shek,” about “liberating” East Europe, about resuscitating Latin-American economies in a decade’s time, and about exporting democracy, American-style, which is scarcely possible.

Bill Fulbright comes from Arkansas, which “made no progress at all from 1865 until about 1940. We were really an underdeveloped society, an exploited society, a colony of the Northeast, whose great corporations sucked out whatever natural wealth we had.” All this helps explain why Fulbright’s time sense is different and why he has an instinctive sympathy for the poor lands of the earth, including Vietnam. His famous student-exchange program may one day prove to have been our most enlightened foreign policy, the strongest of the new threads holding peoples together in understanding, but the father of the project would emphasize “one day.” It is part of his whole vision of foreign policy, which he sees not as construction but as a process, not as the building of an

edifice but as the cultivation of natural things in a given direction. Time is life. He wants no rash actions to abolish the gift of time.

And it is his Arkansas roots and his Arkansas political base that explain the painful, public paradox of Fulbright, the humanitarian, the man of enlightenment, who has voted the straight Southern line on Negro rights, the overwhelming moral issue of modern America. He would flush with anger if anyone called him a bigot or a Negro hater. Clearly, he is neither. But he lives with this “inner discomfort” and does not disguise the fact. His soul must exist in different divided worlds: Fayetteville and Oxford, England; the Ozark back-country and Philadelphia’s Main Line, where he found his charming, enlightened bride. If he hates to talk about this, it is not only because the painful paradox unavoidably exists, but because he fears people will think he is making excuses for himself.

So he has been a constant target of the slide-rule liberals, in spite of all he has done for Negro education and health, where he thinks the foundation stones of Negro progress lie; in spite of his lonely courage in opposing Senator McCarthy to his face when the liberals’ *bête noire* was at the peak of his terrifying power; in spite of his early support for the United Nations and foreign aid, and at a time when the Arkansas majority was against these innovations. But on the bills for civil rights *per se*—no. And for the same simple, candid reason that he would never oppose the Arkansas agricultural council on cotton policy—he did not wish to be retired from public life.

It is an ancient story and dilemma for men in politics. They must survive, first of all, if they are to accomplish anything. This is why, for example, the liberal Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey never dreamt of opposing Minnesota’s dairy industry. It is why young Congressman John F. Kennedy voted fresh appropriations for the House Un-American Activities Committee when he thought the Committee’s methods an abomination. (“I would be dead in my district, otherwise,” he told me at the time.)

As President, incidentally, Kennedy seriously considered Fulbright for Secretary of State because he liked “the play of his mind.” But Fulbright’s name was crossed off the list because of the certainty of opposition by Negro and other civil-rights groups. Did the Senator himself want to be Secretary of State? “I certainly did not,” he said to me. Some of his friends think otherwise.

IT IS NOT GENERALLY KNOWN, but Fulbright was also seriously considered for the presidency of Columbia University before General Eisenhower was given the post. (In his thirties, Fulbright had been president of the University of Arkansas.) Trustees of Columbia asked him if he would consider the job. But this query came too soon—or too late. He had recently been elected to the Senate, in a bitter campaign, with the help of many friends, and, “I thought it immoral to just leave because of what looked like a better job.”

Is this his final term as a Senator?

“Eric, you know a politician can’t say that. I’ll say I’ve given it no thought.”

At a trim and fit 61, the gentleman from Ar-

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kansas has become the most arresting figure in the United States Senate. He has proved the Senate can advise as well as consent, and by a thousand signs, it is clear that President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense all take his advice very, very seriously, whether they admit it or not. It may be that he is working a slow change in American Far Eastern policy. He has done this with no power save his position as foreign relations chairman and the power of intellect. His vision of America's role in the world may not prevail in our practices. But he will have said what he had to say, and the people have listened. He does not know what more a legislator can do for his country. Having done it, he appears to stand now at the high point of his life, the apogee of his career. In any chapter on the year 1966 in any future history book, the name Fulbright will appear, writ large and often.

The nature and the use of the great American power haunt his thoughts. He is no dreamer. He knows that in the world politics of this brilliant and frightening century, purity will precede paralysis; but he also knows that pride still precedes a fall. He knows that goodwill without power behind it is merely an attitude; but he also knows that power without goodwill can mean calamity.

It was past noon on that Saturday morning in February when the Senator and I got out of our chairs. Another contingent of TV cameramen had arrived in the outer office.

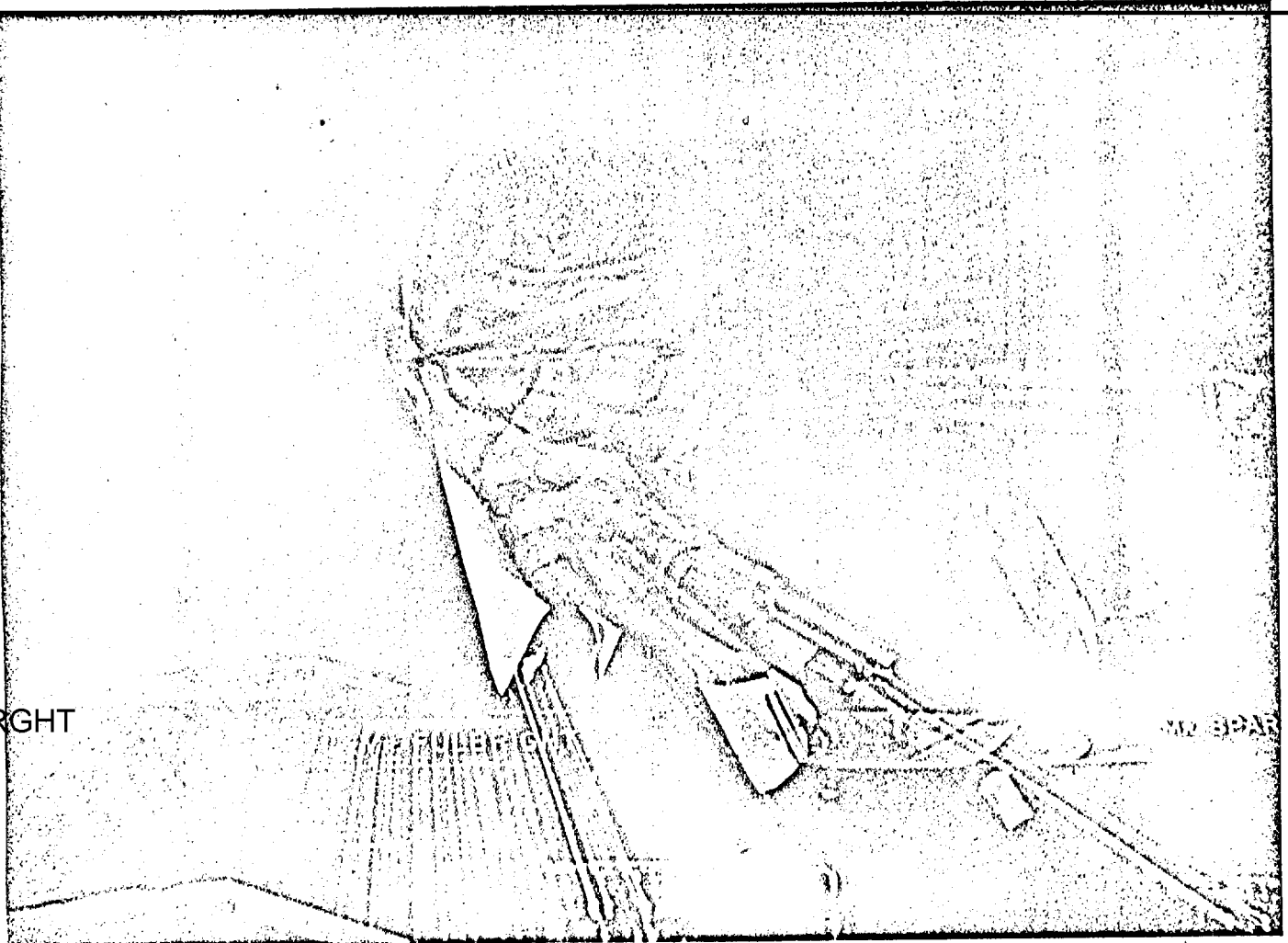
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# SENATE REVOLT:

CPYRGHT

## A HEATED SEARCH FOR A VIETNAM POLICY

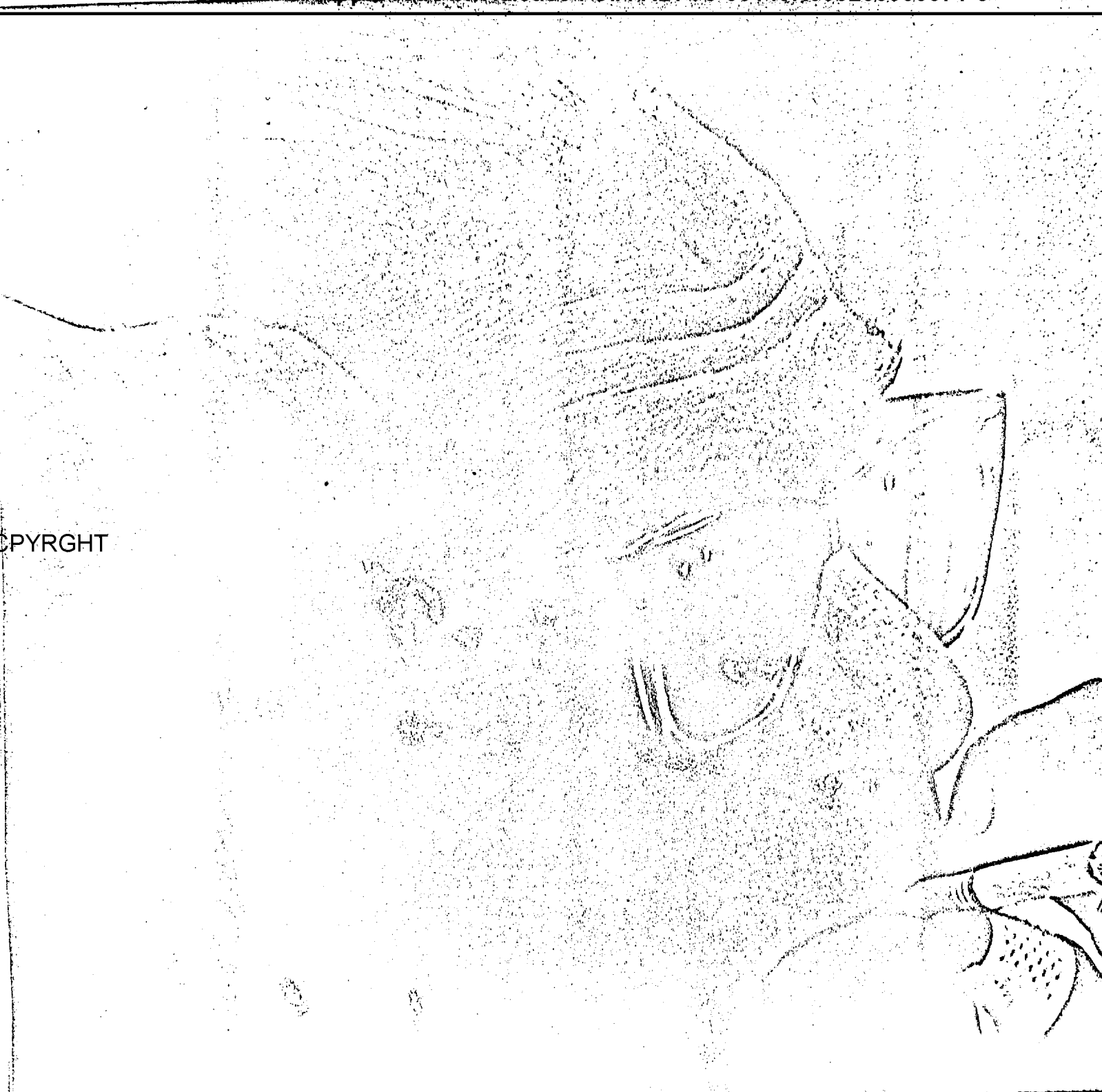


A nation watched and thought as Sen. J.-William Fulbright and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee put a wintry probe into a little war that is growing up. With words measured or thrown, senators walked over party lines to debate the notion that Lyndon B. Johnson might be wrong on Vietnam.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY STANLEY TRETICK

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CPYRGHT



Senator Fulbright reached hard for a new path to negotiations: "... Let's assume these people are not utter idiots." The acceptance of rationality in the enemy was only one quality of what Fulbright later called "a senatorial teach-in." Another was the willingness, amid the litany chanted to unity, to let Americans be self-critical on foreign policy. Fulbright knew that nuances can quench wars.

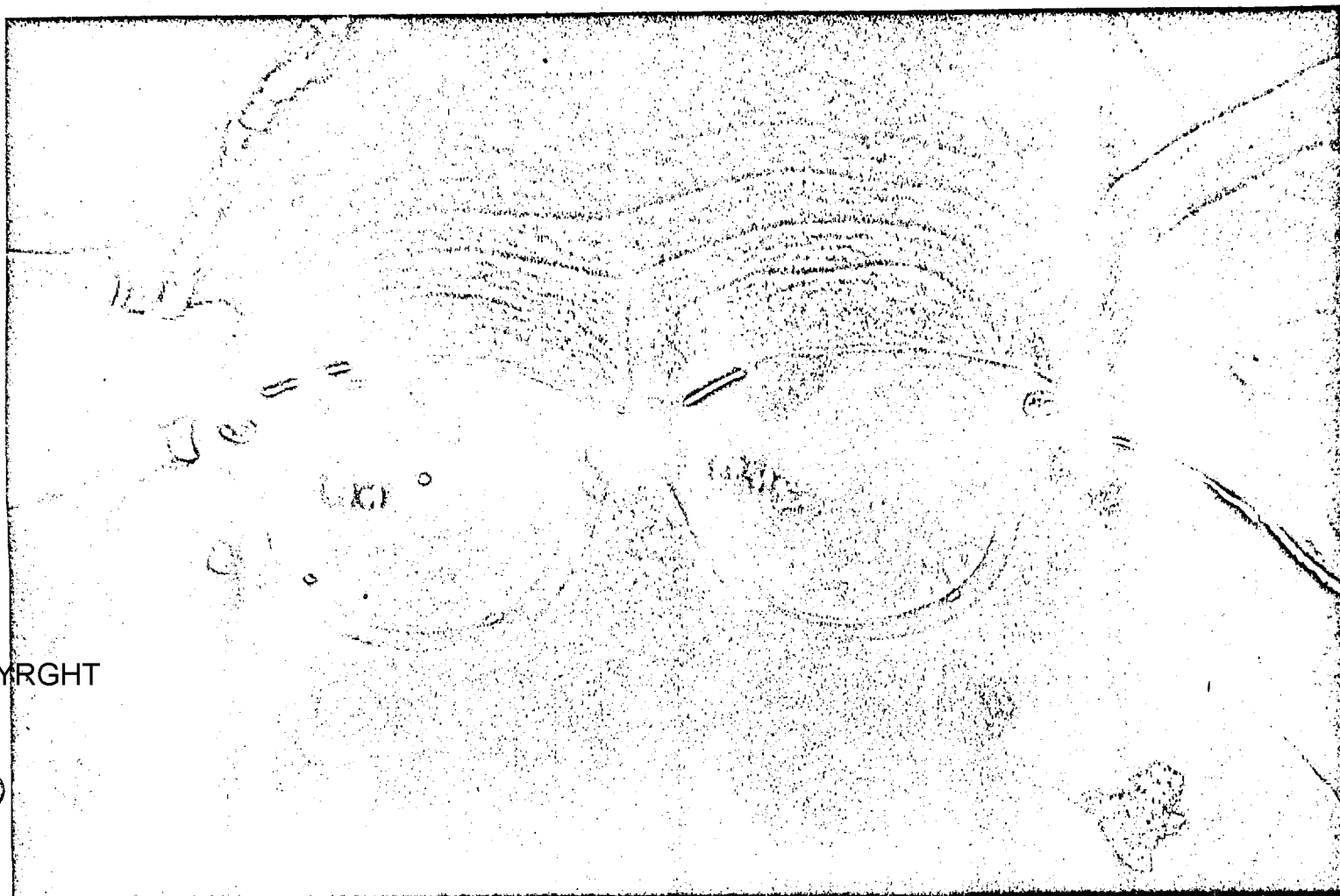
## STRAIN—AND A QUIET CLASH OF WILL

Eyes cool against the shimmer of television lights, Senator Fulbright learned nothing to change his feeling that we fumbled on Vietnam.

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Gen. James M. Gavin: "... We have been escalating at the will of our opponents rather than on our own judgment."

I said, "Senator, I think you want to believe that rationality and order are stronger forces than irrationality and disorder in this world."

"Now, you remind me of something, Eric. Here's a little essay sent me by an old fellow who lives back in the Ozarks, a mountaineer without much formal education."

Fulbright read the essay, which said, in part: "With all man's limitations, he yet has one advantage over animals—the power of reason, but history shows that he often discards that for superstition . . . he is the only animal that will build homes, towns and cities at such a cost in sacrifice and suffering and then turn around and destroy them in war . . . where he came from, or when, or how, or

where he is going after death he does not know, but he hopes to live again in ease and idleness where he can worship his gods and enjoy himself, watching his fellow creatures wriggle and writhe in eternal flames down in hell."

Fulbright chuckled and said he didn't *believe* the world was a rational place, he just *hoped* we could move it in that direction. "I'm not sure I'm very optimistic about the human race. But if you are to function at all in this business or nearly any other, you have to believe it's possible."

Like his friend, Adlai Stevenson, Senator Fulbright lives, not with indecisiveness, as so many think, but with the courage of his doubts. He knows the great secret. Sophocles expressed it: "This law shall ever be true: Nothing that is vast enters into the life of mortals without a curse."

Twentieth century communism is a vast thing. So is the American power.

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Continued

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Secretary of State Dean Rusk spoke diplomatese: "...The need to check the extension of Communist power in order to maintain a reasonable stability in a precarious world."

Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor: "We intend to show that the 'war of liberation,'... is costly, dangerous and doomed to failure."

Continued

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Sen. Robert F. Kennedy slipped into the caucus room and stood silently among the spectators. Later, he urged Vietcong participation in negotiating a settlement.

## SENATE REVOLT CONTINUED

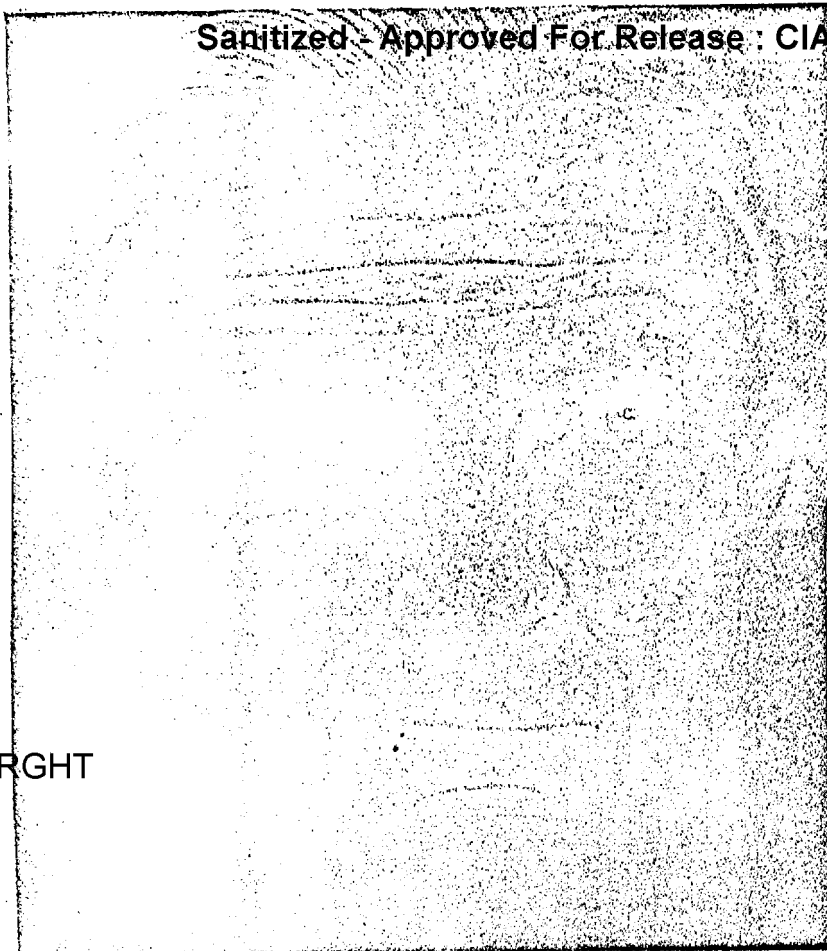
# CONSENSUS RUBS THIN

in the thickets of tense exploration Senators and witnesses sometimes forgot the difference between an emotion and a point of view. Then, the talking got starchy, and even the consensus on politeness wore down. Oregon's Wayne Morse said the American people would repudiate the war in Vietnam. Gen. Maxwell Taylor retorted and said, "That's of course, but we're not going to let the Senator." Peering past Hanoi, the Committee began a cool look at the shrilling giant of Asia: Red China.

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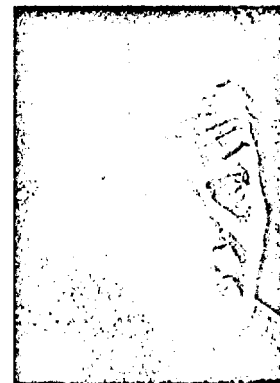


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Sen. W. Stuart Symington, long on national defense, avoided bursts of rhetoric for the strain of learning more.



Mrs. J. William Fulbright listened to the stir her husband was creating.



Mrs. Robert S. McNamara visited the public hearings. Her husband did not.



Sens. Wayne Morse (left) and Albert Gore measure former Ambassador George F. Kennan's words: "...I think our military involvement in Vietnam has to be recognized as unfortunate."

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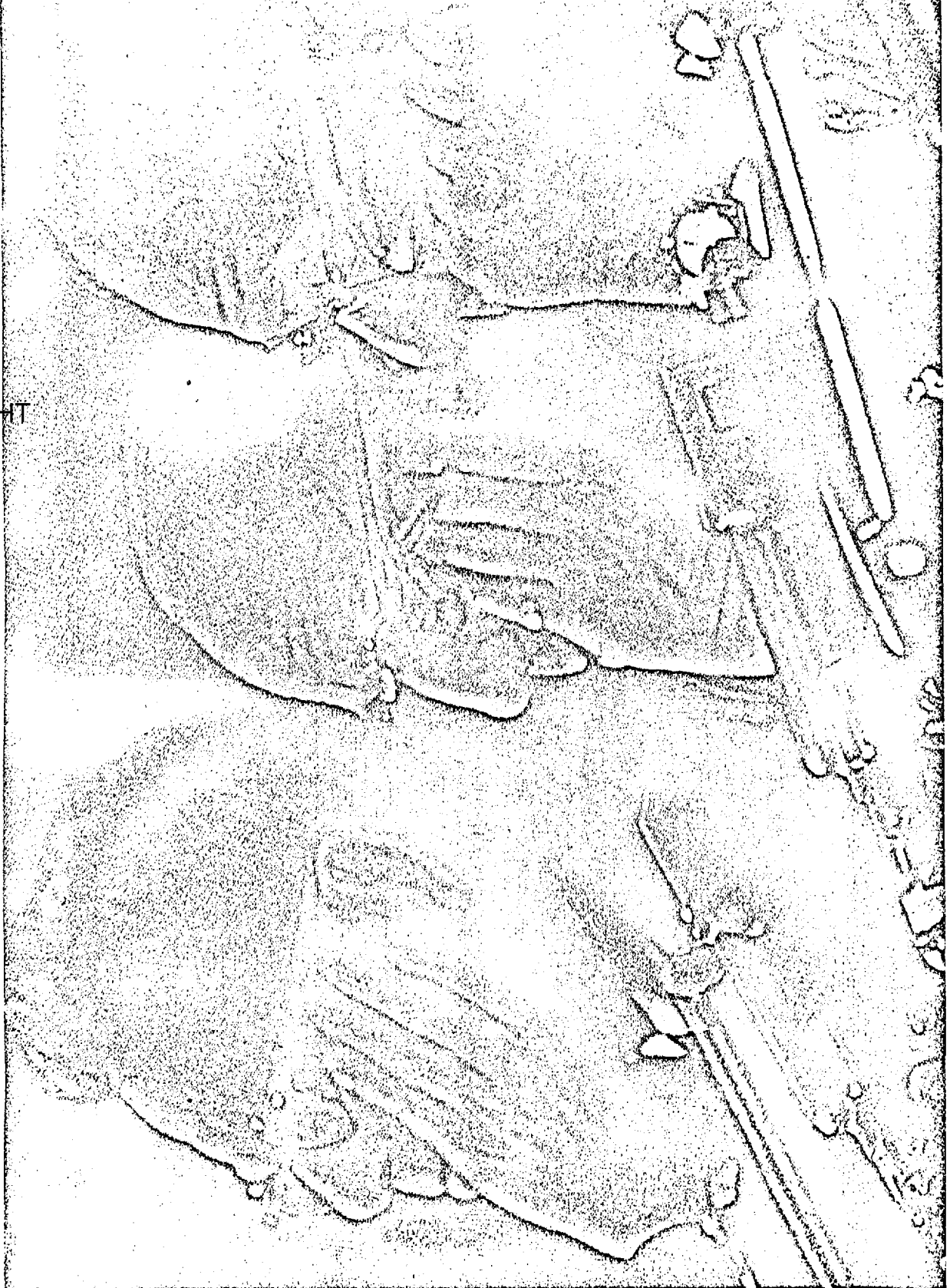
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END

Sens. George D. Aiken, Bourke B. Hickenlooper and Fulbright rarely took the same position. But the friction of their disagreements lit up a shadowed world.

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